

Final leg of Macomb Orchard Trail open to the public

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The final paved portion of the Macomb Orchard Trail was officially opened to the public Oct. 11.

The Macomb Orchard Trail, a 24-mile trail that begins in Shelby Township and extends to the city of Richmond, had the last portion of unpaved trail completed this year between Armada Township and Richmond. Also completed this year was a bridge over a northern branch of the Clinton River that connects the eastern and western segments of the trail.

"We talk about economic development but the reason people move to Macomb County is a lot more to do with the community development and this trail system in northern Macomb County is absolutely incredible," said Macomb County Executive Mark Hackel.

Hackel said Macomb County has grown by more than 50,000 people during the last decade, and much of that had to do with projects and opportunities like the Macomb Orchard Trail.

"The question is, why did they come here?" he said. "It is about community development, recreational opportunities, things that people like to see in and around the communities, and trails and parks are those reasons people like to bring their families in and around an area to live."

Congresswoman Candice Miller said the Macomb Orchard Trail is important to the area for a number of reasons.

"When you look at the demographics, and look at the last census and see what has happened in Macomb County the last decade and southeastern Michigan region, I think the big reason we have done so well with our population ... is because they are looking for quality-of-life kinds of things," she said. "I really look at these trails as long-linear parks for all practical purposes."

"It has been a complete team effort to make this trail a reality," Miller continued.

Commissioner Don Brown, who is also a member of the Macomb Orchard Trail Commission, said this trail will continue to provide an economic boost to northern Macomb County.

"It is going to continue. Though the main path of the trail is completed, now we are going to be working to add amenities along the trail," said Brown.

Brown said now that the main path of the trail is paved all the way to Richmond, people of all levels of health and fitness will have an easier time using it.

On top of that, the trail will continue to provide an economic boost to the community by drawing people from other parts of the county and state.

"In this tough economy we need all of this we can for our local area, so this also provides and important economic element for all of those surrounding the trail," said Brown.

Washington Township Clerk Kathy Bosheers, who is also a member of the Macomb Orchard Trail Commission, thanked the volunteers who maintain the trail and said she looks forward to the future.

"Those amenities that Commissioner Brown talked about, those are the things that we are looking forward to as far as planning," she said, adding that residents are welcome to approach the Macomb Orchard Trail Commission to provide input and feedback on moving the trail forward. "We seek your input. We want to continue to make this a great opportunity for all residents of Macomb County."

The land for the trail was purchased from the Canadian National Railroad by Macomb County in 1998 for \$3.5 million.